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ED 016 602 RE 001 130

ADAPTING A BEGINNING READING PROGRAM FOR SPANISH-SPEAKING CHILDREN.

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PUB DATE 10 FEB 68

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.25 HC-$0.36 7P.

DESCRIPTORS- *READING PROGRAMS, *PROGRAMED INSTRUCTION, *BEGINNING READING, SPANISH SPEAKING, *KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN, *BILINGUAL STUDENTS, PROGRAMED MATERIALS, FEEDBACK, PROMPTING, WORD RECOGNITION, NON ENGLISH SPEAKING, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES,

A BEGINNING READING PROGRAM FOR SPANISH-SPEAKING CHILDREN IS REPORTED. A STUDY, SPONSORED BY THE SOUTHWEST REGIONAL LABORATORY FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT (SWRL), DEVELOPED LEARNING SEQUENCES FOR A BEGINNING READING PROGRAM FOR KINDERGARTEN CLASSROOMS WITH SPANISH-SPEAKING CHILDREN THROUGHOUT THE SOUTHWEST REGION. EACH OF 21 10-MINUTE PROGRAMED LESSONS DEVELOPED WAS PRESENTED THROUGH A TAPE RECORDER AND VISUAL DISPLAYS ON CARDS TO SPANISH-SPEAKING PRESCHOOL CHILDREN. EACH CHILD WAS REQUIRED TO MAKE ABOUT 60 ORAL RESPONES DURING EACH LESSON. INSTRUCTIONS IN ENGLISH WERE GRADUALLY SUBSTITUTED FOR INSTRUCTIONS IN SPANISH ONLY AFTER THE CHILD HAD MASTERED THE TASK. THE CHILD WAS ALWAYS ASKED TO RESPOND IN ENGLISH. CORRECT FEEDBACK WAS PROVIDED THROUGH PROMPTING AND CONFIRMATION. THE TEST SCORES OF SPANISH-SPEAKING CHILDREN WHO RECEIVED INSTRUCTION THROUGH THIS PROGRAMED ADJUNCT, WHEN COMPARED WITH THE TEST SCORES OF ENGLISH-SPEAKING CHILDREN WHO RECEIVED REGUALR CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION, SUPPORTED THE THESIS THAT IT IS POSSIBLE TO INCREASE THE PROBABILITIES OF READING SUCCESS FOR SPANISH-SPEAKING CHILDREN AFTER CAREFUL IDENTIFICATION OF LEARNER TASKS AND SELECTION OF INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES THAT ELICIT THE DESIRED RESPONSE TO PRINTED STIMULI. THIS PAPER WAS PRESENTED AT THE AMERICAN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE (CHICAGO, FEBRUARY 6-10, 1968). (NS)

AERA

Adapting a Beginning Reading Program for Spanish-Speaking Children

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How can Spanish-speaking children achieve as high or higher levels of achievement as native speakers of English from a beginning reading program designed for kindergarten classrooms throughout the Southwest Region? We can assume that without some modification in program or supplementary activities Mexican-American children will not achieve the criterion levels considered acceptable by those at SWRL who prepared the reading curriculum.

The approach to the problem posed is a simple one: develop a self-instructional adjunct that will equip the Spanish speaker with the competencies demanded by the instructional objectives of the SWRL program. In other words, develop learning sequences that teach to the objectives, e.g., given a printed letter, the learner will be able to make its sound; given a certain sound, the learner will be able to select the grapheme that corresponds to it; given several printed words, the learner will be able to pronounce them. Basic to teaching for the objectives are two considerations: (1) the task analysis to identify what the learner must be able to do before he can achieve the objective; and (2) selection of instructional practices that will regularly elicit desirable responses from the child in the presence of printed stimuli. In the present case, task analysis revealed a number of prerequisite skills. For instance, the child must be able to respond to instructions in English, such as (a) "Put your finger on the letter s." and (b) "What is the name of this letter?"

* This study was conducted under the auspices of Southwest Regional Laboratory for Educational Research and Development (SWRL). Appreciation is expressed to Mr. Hubert Molina for Spanish translation, recording, and essential arrangements in the tryouts and with revisions; to Miss Jennifer Grant for item writing and sequencing and for preparation of materials; to Sister Anne Lorraine and Mary Ellen McNeil for administering the program in schools.

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The child must know what he is being asked to do and he should be able to do what is asked. Our strategy for solving the dual problem of helping the Spanish speaker know what is being asked and developing his ability to make the response demanded is as follows. First, the Mexican-American child is given instructions in Spanish (thereby knowing what is being asked), e.g.,

1. Esta letra se llama s. Escuchame s. Repite s. (pause) s
2. Como se llama esta letra? (pause) s. Se llama s.
3. Dime como se llama esta letra? (pause) s.

When the child masters the task, i.e., he can provide the name of the letter, he is then given the same task but with instructions in English. The transition from Spanish to English presumably is made easier by gradual substitution of the Spanish terms. For example, "Como se llama esta letra?" becomes "Como se llama this letter?" and finally "What is the name of this letter?" The key to the problem, however, seems to be that one does not change the language of instruction until the child masters the task. In a sense, the learner's habit of correctly responding in the presence of certain printed stimuli serve as an indicator to the Mexican-American as to what the English speaker is saying when the English commands are given in the presence of the same familiar stimuli. Instructions in English are given immediately following the successful performance in response to the Spanish instructions. Hence the child learns the English directions for the task which he can already perform. It should be noted, however, that the child is always asked to respond in English--voicing the English sounds, phonograms, words, and sentences he is learning to read (i.e., text).

Description of Programmed Materials for Mexican-American Children

To date, 21 programmed lessons have been prepared. These 21 lessons are designed to teach to the same objectives found in the first 7 weeks of the SWRL program. Each lesson is approximately 10 minutes in length and is presented by tape recorder and accompanying visual displays. The child is required to make nearly 60 responses in each ten-minute period. His responses are of two types---oral and selected, i.e., "What is the name of this letter?" (oral) and "Put your finger on the letter s."

(selected). Confirmation as to the correctness of the learner's oral response is given by the taped commentary as it repeats the correct response following that of the learner's; confirmation of the selected response is made by indicating the color of the correct selection. The child has not been required to correct his responses before proceeding.

Both confirmation and prompting have been used to elicit desired responses: For example:

1. Esta letra se llama s.
   Como se llama esta letra? (pause) s
2. Does this word say am or Sam? (pause) am
3. am — Say the sounds these letters make. (pause) am
   Sam — Read this word. (pause) Sam
   I am — Read this sentence. (pause) I am
   I am Sam — Read this sentence. (pause) I am Sam
   am — Say the sounds these letters make. (pause) am

The percentage of recall items (e.g., "Say this word.") to identification items (e.g., "Put your finger on s.") is 66% and 34% respectively.

Each letter, sound, word, and sentence is sytematically reviewed. For instance, the letter I is first introduced in Lesson 3 when the child is asked to respond to this letter 11 times. He responds to I in subsequent lessons for a total of 76 times. Economy of review occurs when the child reads sentences, e.g., "I am Sam." The smallest number of responses required to any particular word is 25. The word sat is not introduced until Lesson 18. Some attempt at generalization of the final s is made when after learning the words see and sees, for instance, the child is expected to differentiate meet from meets without instruction.

Approximately nine criterion items which sample the content of previous lessons appear at the end of each lesson for the purpose of review and practice in responding to the tasks out of context, independent from the particular lesson in which they are emphasized.

Subjects and Procedures used in developing the Materials

Most lessons were revised at least four times on the basis of both individual performance on the particular lesson (daily error rate) and learners' performances on the posttest given at the end of instruction. Prior to the latest version of the program ten Spanish-speaking children served as the subjects. These children were five years of age and had newly arrived from Mexico. They were identified by the school as non-English speaking pupils. They were, however, receiving instruction in English from a special language teacher in the school at the same time as they were being given the programmed adjunct.

The current version of the program was presented to five Spanish-speaking kindergarten children. The lessons were usually given to groups of 2 or 3. Upon a few occasions all children received the lessons at the same time; at other times, an individual child received his lesson without the presence of his peers. Variation in this practice was due to the need for giving more than one lesson daily after a child had been absent. Also there was some indication that grouping of the children on the basis of their degree of shyness was desirable. For instance, a very timid girl was reluctant to respond in the presence of a boy who eagerly and quickly voiced an answer even though there was an attempt to have the children take turns in responding, rather than engage in a choral response.

The lessons were, however, presented solely as programmed on the tape. The research assistant operated the recorder and presented the visual stimuli on cards.

The posttest was nearly identical to the one administered to 168 kindergarten children who had received seven weeks of instruction by teachers using the SWRL reading material without adjunct. A description of the test appears in the paper presented by Dr. Berger entitled, "Pupil Performance in A Kindergarten Reading Program." The test differed in that each Spanish-speaking child responded to all the items on the test (items that measured Objectives 1-10), whereas in the population at large, each child responded to items on one of three forms.

Results

One way to report the results of using the programmed adjunct is to compare the scores earned on the posttest by the Spanish-speaking children after 3½ hours of instruction (4 weeks at 10 minutes a day) with the scores earned in regular teacher-taught classrooms by English-speaking pupils after nearly 13 hours of instruction (average 23 minutes daily for 7 weeks). Table I gives this comparison data presenting the percentage of correct responses to the ten objectives common to children in the two situations. One may also wish to compare scores earned by the Spanish-speaking children with scores on the same test earned by a larger population of children who received 12 weeks of instruction by teachers using the SWRL curriculum--See Robert J. Berger's handout to accompany "Pupil Performance in a Kindergarten Reading Program," a paper presented at the present symposium.

Discussion

The data warrant the conclusion that it is possible to increase the probabilities of success in reading for Spanish-speaking children. It is assumed that this success occurred chiefly because of the following: (a) teaching to specific objectives, (b) not offering a range of learning opportunities that are irrelevant to the objectives, (c) permitting the child to learn each task through instruction in his native language before asking him in English to perform the task, (d) giving him many--often as many as 70 opportunities to respond to the visual stimuli, and (e) helping him produce correct responses during the learning phase by prompting his responses and by confirming them.

Limitations regarding the generalizability of the findings should be mentioned. The Mexican-American subjects were few in number--too few to allow generalization to the larger Mexican-American population. Secondly, the fact that the children were taught individually in small groups also may have contributed to the favorable comparison of the adjunct to ordinary classroom instruction where teachers have

larger numbers and more accompanying problems of management.

The program should be improved. Five of the ten objectives were not mastered by all children. Perhaps requiring the child to correct his errors before proceeding would increase his score. It should be said, however, that the adjunct was originally intended to accompany the SWRL program, not replace it. If Spanish-speaking children can achieve better than English-speaking children on 6 out of 10 tasks involving the reading of English and after only 2½ hours of programmed instruction as opposed to the English-speaking children's attendance for 13 hours of instruction in the classroom, then what might these Mexican-Americans do if they received both the adjunct and classroom instruction?

TABLE I

Spanish Speaker (after adjunct) and English Speaker (after instruction by teacher) Achievement Scores (percentage correct) by Objective

Objective	Spanish Speaker	English Speaker
1. Given a printed letter, to make its sound.	100%	62%
2. Given a sound, to select the letter that corresponds to it.	100	85
3. Given a printed phoneme, to make its sound.	26	37
4. Given a sound, to select the phoneme that corresponds to it.	75	64
5. Given a printed word from the program, to pronounce it.	35	60
6. Given the sound of a word, to select the word which corresponds to it.	85	78
7. Given the name of a letter, to select the printed letter.	80	76
8. Given a letter, to name it.	66	53
9. Given printed sentences from the program, to read them aloud.	30	52
10. Given <u>new</u> sentences from the program, to read them aloud.	25	32

This handout accompanies "Adapting a Beginning Reading Program for Spanish-Speaking Children" a paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, February 10, 1968.